

REFORM TRACTS---NO. 6.

THE PULPIT HOLDS THE SLAVES, AND WILL YET FREE THEM.

BY E. SMITH.

There are simple evils, moral, social, and political, and there are some which are compound, partly of one, and partly of another ; they are moral and social, or moral, social, and political. Slavery is of the latter class. It is a moral, social and political evil, and this compound evil has a political or legal existence. Laws are political actions ; and as slavery is a creature of statute law, exists in the statutes of slavery, and cannot exist without such laws, it has a political existence—political action gives it its being—though that being includes social and moral wrong. Statutes may ordain social and moral evil. These statutes are at once political, social, and moral evils, for what is morally wrong cannot be politically right—a moral evil cannot be a good of any kind. Morality is the basis of all good, a good of any kind must have a moral basis ; it cannot be a good without such a foundation.

The existence of slavery is a political combination, (in the form of statutes,) of the social and moral wrongs which it contains. The remedy is to repeal those stat-

utes. This repeal consists in a political combination of the moral rights, which will overthrow and neutralize the moral wrongs of the system. Political action can never combine more moral sentiment than exists in the community. This is its limit. It can go no farther.— And when there is moral sentiment enough in the community against a great moral wrong, it will force up the political action necessary for its overthrow. The desideratum is moral sentiment; without this there is no hope, with it there is no fear of the overthrow of the moral wrong of slavery. And what is true on moral questions, is true on all questions, in republics, where the people make the laws. Whenever the public becomes opposed to any law or statute, that law will be repealed. This is the natural operation of our government. As soon as there is sufficient public sentiment against any law, the repeal of that law follows certainly; and when the public sentiment become sufficiently strong against any practice, it will form itself into laws for its overthrow. Witness the Temperance reform.

But how are we to create the moral sentiment necessary for the overthrow of slavery? By employing the manufacturers of that sentiment to produce more. If there be a scarcity of anything we must prevail on the producers of it to make more. This is the only way to remedy the evil. The manufacturers of moral sentiment must be induced to produce more, or the evil cannot be overcome. The religious teachers are the producers of moral sentiment, in all lands. It matters not what religion is taught, the masses adopt the expositions of its accredited teachers as true, and though they often fall be-

how the morality of these teachings, they never rise above it. This is true of Paganism, Mahommedanism, Judaism, or Christianity. All religions address the religious principle in man, and have a powerful influence on his conduct, and the masses in all lands are believers in the prevailing religion. There are unbelievers of all religions, but they are the few, the many believe. And where the many govern, as in this nation, the law on all moral questions, will be an embodiment of the religious sentiment of the people on these questions. Any practice which the religion of a nation condemns the laws will be very apt to condemn, but any practice which its religion approves the laws will never condemn.

We see the truth of this position in the fact that the religion of this nation condemns polygamy. There is not a religious body in this nation, but the Mormons, who would give membership to a polygamist—not one. And this teaching is embodied in the laws; every State has laws to punish this crime. But in Utah, where the religious teachings approve of it men may have forty wives.

Polygamy is a far less crime than slavery, God's law being the standard. Manstealing is the scriptural name of slavery. We have the very highest authority, both Calvinistic and Arminian, for so saying. In the legislation of Jehovah, in the Old Testament, slavery is classed with murder, and in the classification of crimes in the New the Apostle Paul classes it with murder of the most revolting kind; murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers and man-stealers are classed together. No such condemnation rests on polygamy any where in the Holy

Scriptures. And yet slaveholders are not only unpunished by law, but honored with the highest political stations. Why this? may well be asked. The only answer is this: The religion of an overwhelming majority of this nation sanctions slavery, gives slaveholders membership in the church, honors them with the highest offices in it, endorses their Christian character—more, their ministerial character, and sends them forth as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. This religion declares that slaveholding is compatible with the highest style of man here, and his highest destiny hereafter. Moral qualities which fit a man for a place in a christian church, and the christian ministry, fit him for any civil station, so far as moral qualities are required. If he be intellectually qualified, he is not morally disqualified in the estimation of those who endorse his religious character, and that is done by a large majority of the religionists of the nation.

If the religion of this nation was a unit in excluding slaveholders from the church, as it is in the case of polygamists, the laws sustaining slavery would not only soon be repealed, but others passed to punish it. The church must pitch the tune to the song of freedom. No moral evil can be overthrown in any country, until the religion of the country condemn it. This is confirmed by all past history.

The teachings of the pulpit form the moral sentiments of the people. If the pulpit of this nation was a unit in its condemnation of slavery, the religion of the country would be the same. If the one taught that it was not only a sin, but a sin of the highest turpitude, "the sum

of all villainies," a sin classed by the God of Heaven with murder, in the punishment meted out to it by him, the other would no more admit slaveholders to membership than it would murderers, and the community would not only repeal all slave laws, but speedily pass others for the punishment of slaveholding. The blood, tears, and death groans of the enslaved millions of this land are chargeable on the American pulpit. This pulpit must be reformed before slavery can be peaceably abolished.—The pulpit holds the slaves of this nation. As soon as the church treats slavery as God's word treats it, the days of this terrible curse will soon end.

The remedy for slavery is to convert the American pulpit to God and his truth, and American religion to Christianity. This is the true mission of reformers. A noble and glorious beginning is now made in this blessed work and the end makes haste.

The Hunker parties of this country, both religious and political, are formed upon the wheelbarrow principle, to go just as far as they are pushed. They are all controlled by outside pressure. This is emphatically true of the popular pulpit of this nation. We do not say this as an enemy of the pulpit, for we have spent as much time in it, as any man we have known for the last thirty-six years, and expect to be an occupant of it while we are able. We say it with deep regret, and lament that truth requires it to be said.

When the Temperance reformation commenced there were but few, very few, ministers who took an active part in it, but as the outside pressure began to bear upon them they became more active, until they were nearly all

pressed into it. They were shoved forward like a wheelbarrow, stopping whenever the shoving ceased. There were, from the beginning of the reform, a few ministers who took an active part; they required no shoving, but their number was small, yet they formed a temperance pulpit, and this pulpit has become the pulpit of the country, and has overturned the evil of intemperance. But what was true of the temperance cause, was true in a far more more extended sense in the anti-slavery reform. Few, very few, ministers identified themselves with this cause, and those who did it lost caste with the ministry; and some of them were degraded from their ministry by their ministerial brethren for acting with the anti-slavery reformers, and others were kept out of the ministry for the same cause. The records of the past prove these statements.

But the anti-slavery cause has gradually progressed until its friends have become legion, and the less solid structure of political hunkerdom has given way before it, and the iron bands of religious organizations are being weakened, and in some instances burst in sunder. This state of things is shoving the pulpit on to anti-slavery ground. No preachers are now tried for anti-slavery, nor kept out of the ministerial work on that account.— Things have changed for the better. Ministers now generally claim to be anti-slavery; but they are, pretty generally, passively so. They have been shoved on to the political anti-slavery platform, they will not vote for a slaveholder for a civil office, but they will give him the right hand of christian fellowship. This is the position of the ministers of slaveholding churches, generally.

The organization of anti-slavery parties drove in the sides of the political pro-slavery parties. For a time they treated the Liberty party with contempt, then they tried to seduce it from the way of truth and right. Then they united with it in the Free Soil party, and afterwards tried to take it into the old Democratic party. But true anti-slavery men would not go. They rallied again under the name of the Free Democratic party, and showed a terrifying strength. They were then met in the late Fusion party by nearly all of one of the old pro-slavery parties, and a large number from the other. In this state of things slavery took hold of Know Nothingism to maintain its power, but the anti-slavery of the Free States has become too strong for the sworn bands of this order, and are bursting them in sunder.

How has this remarkable state of things been brought about? The anti-slavery political organization formed a nucleus around which men of principle and heart could rally; and as the light spread by the apostles of humanity men saw it and left their old pro-slavery parties, for the new anti-slavery one. The new one had several names, but substantially the same principles, and is wholly composed of seceders from the old parties who have become converted to the principles of anti-slavery. But it has been substantially the same party under different names. But had it not been for political organization, political anti-slavery could never have showed its strength and "drove in the ribs" of the old pro-slavery organizations. The political movement was pressed with one difficulty, the people were all Whigs or Democrats, and the new party was not regarded as either. So that

when a man became converted to anti-slavery he could not carry all his Whiggery or Democracy with him into the new party. This retarded its progress. Had it not been for this it would have progressed faster.

What political anti-slavery was to the pro-slavery parties religious anti-slavery will be to the slaveholding churches. There are now ten religious organizations in this country, who make slaveholding a bar to church membership: 1. The Reformed Presbyterians, (old school,) 2. The Reformed Presbyterians, (new school,) commonly called Covenanters. 3. The Friends, or Quakers. 4. The United Brethren in Christ. 5. The Tunkers. 6. The Free Will Baptists. 7. The Evangelical Association, called Albrights. 8. Associate Presbyterians, called Seceders. 9. The Wesleyan Methodists.—10. The Free Presbyterians. No one of these will give membership to a slaveholder. A portion of the Associate Reformed Presbyterians, called Unionists, do the same thing. This body has three Synods. A Western, Eastern, and Southern Synod. What fraternal relations exist between these Synods we cannot say, but the Western Synod excludes slaveholders from church membership. And we believe the Seventh Day Baptists, and the Church of God, called Winebrennarians, do the same, but we are not certain. There are some anti-slavery Congregational churches, and some pro-slavery ones.—The West is generally anti-slavery, the East pro-slavery. The pulpit of these churches is anti-slavery. We have a pro-slavery pulpit, which now holds the slaves, and we have an anti-slavery one, which will in the end free them, by supplanting the pro-slavery pulpit and becoming

the pulpit of the country. This is the slave's hope.

Religious anti slavery has attracted but little attention comparatively ; but it has planted a cordon of anti-slavery churches around the great slaveholding churches of this nation, and although these churches are comparatively small, they are large enough, and near enough to see each other's signals, and to act in concert. They hold every peculiarity of doctrine of the great slaveholding churches, excepting always the doctrine that slaveholding is right and authorized by the Bible ; and every peculiarity of church polity held by them. This variety of religious anti slavery organizations has this advantage over the political party, of which we have been writing. Anti-slavery men can bring all their principles of doctrine, usage, and church polity, with them into an anti-slavery church. They have no sacrifice to make of anything, either of principle, usage, polity, or even prejudice, in leaving a slaveholding church and joining an anti-slavery one. Thus has Providence prepared the way for breaking up the great slaveholding churches of this nation, and forcing their pulpit to take anti-slavery ground.

Very great efforts have been made to keep from the membership of these churches in the free States a knowledge of their connection with slavery. The New School Presbyterian General Assembly went nearly into spasms at a proposition to poll that church on this subject, and falsehoods enough have been told to sink any cause to prevent the members of the M. E. Church from learning its connection with this evil. Thousands upon thousands are made to believe there is not one slaveholder in that

church, that it is clear of slavery, while there are hundreds upon hundreds in it. And those who cannot be thus blinded are made to believe the church will soon be clear of this evil. Many, very many, of these honest christians would leave that church, if they knew its connection with slavery. But their preachers keep dark, their papers keep dark, and when the truth reaches them from other sources their preachers tell them that it is a lie, and they believe their preachers. We do not say that all the preachers do this, but many do, those who do it not do not call those to an account who do, though they know they do it and that they speak falsely in so saying. Those who do not speak falsely connive at falsehood. This is the exact state of things in that church. We are ready to give names, places, and dates, in proof of the statements here made.

And what is true of the M. E. Church, is true to some extent in all the pro-slavery churches, but they have not been as much agitated by the anti-slavery question, as has the M. E. Church. Most anti-slavery men have regarded this church as the most pro-slavery in the land. Its action has authorized this conclusion; but that action, was required to keep down the anti-slavery element in it. We have known that church long, and we have known it well; and we know that there is more of the anti-slavery element in it than in any other slaveholding church in the land; and to keep down this element the authorities of that body have found it necessary to put forth extra pro-slavery actions. They did no more than the circumstances of the case required. The authorities of the other slaveholding churches have done all

that their circumstances required. They are no better than the Methodists, in this particular, they would have done more, had more been needed. They have not so strong an anti slavery element to control, and had not to do so much to keep it in subjection.

But light is breaking into the slaveholding churches in despite of the pulpit of those churches. The members are becoming better acquainted with the great evil and sin of slaveholding, and of their ecclesiastical connection with it. The literature of the country is now, to a great extent, anti-slavery, the press of the free States is anti-slavery, the politics are anti-slavery. Legislative action is the same. Light is shining all through the free States, breaking upon the minds of the people from many points of observation. This light will guide every Christian in these slaveholding churches to anti-slavery. Every Christian is converted to the "one fatherhood of God, and the one brotherhood of man," and this is the fundamental doctrine of anti-slavery. It is identical with christianity, on the slavery question. All Christians are in heart anti-slavery, but the minds of very many have been abused, on this subject, they have been made to believe it is something very different from what it is, and thus induced to oppose it. But the light of truth is fast dis-abusing their minds, and they are finding "they were always anti-slavery but did not know it." No means is now left the pro slavery pulpit, to keep the light from their hearers. We have got them just where we have long wanted them, and often feared it never could be done. It is surely the Lord's doings, and marvelous in our eyes.

The present state of things must result in liberating the anti-slavery element, in all the slaveholding churches of the country, at no distant day ; and that element is identified with all the christianity in them, and when one is liberated the other is also ; and both will separate from those churches, and unite with the anti-slavery churches of the land, as certain as holiness shuns sin, and seeks a union with kindred qualities. This will leave these slaveholding churches destitute of all religious influence, and few decent persons will be willing to join them ; and no pious ones will either join them or stay in them. The anti-slavery churches are destined to contain all the piety and religious influence of the free States, in a few years—ten or fifteen at farthest.

These churches differ on many things, but they are a unit in driving slavery from the church of Jesus Christ. In this great battle they are one, and they are a mighty one. They have numbers, they have wealth, they have learning, they have talent ; and more than all these, they have piety—faith in God. And they are now marshalling their forces for a united attack on slaveholding religion. And though one of these churches or denominations, separately considered, is a feeble power, all of them is a mighty one. We say again, our signals are in sight of each other, and on these signals are inscribed, no slaveholder can be a Christian. The great battle is set in array. We have got an anti-slavery pulpit, that is so, from inward principle, not from outward pressure ; and that pulpit will be supported by the piety of the land, and the slaveholding pulpit will have to change its position or perish. This is our hope.

The M. E. Church will soon be agitated, as it never was on the subject of slavery. The light has revealed the fact that that church is deeply involved in the sin of slavery ; and the anti-slavery element in it will not stand it. This has driven several of the Annual Conferences to pass resolutions in favor of making slaveholding a bar to membership. These resolutions must go to the General Conference, which will set in May, 1856. That body we think will not concur in them, and no new condition of membership will be recommended. But should we be mistaken, the measure must then go down to the Annual Conferences, and a majority of three-fourths of these conferences must favor the proposed new condition, before it can become the law of the church. This majority cannot be got soon, as eight Annual Conferences of thirty-eight, extend into slave States, and have slaveholding members.

But the question is now up, and these sendings of it, from conference to conference, will keep it up ; it will be a subject of discussion in conferences, from time to time, and in the papers of that church, and the people will become fully informed of their connection with it.— And one of two things will follow, that church will have to exclude slaveholders, or the Christians that are in it will leave it, and join anti-slavery churches. If the first should take place, the pulpit of that great church will become anti-slavery ; if the second, its pulpit will be forsaken of good men and women, and be powerless to a very great extent ; and the anti-slavery pulpit will be made strong ; and creative of anti-slavery principles, which will certainly overthrow slavery. And what is

true of the M. E. Church, will presently be true of all the slaveholding churches. The anti-slavery element in that church being stronger than in the others, forces action sooner ; but they will all have to follow in due time ; and slaveholders will have to be excluded from all the churches of the free States, at no distant day, or they will become a stink in the nostrils of both piety and decency, and the anti-slavery churches will concentrate the piety of the free States. This is just as certain as any thing can be.

As soon as the churches of the free States become a unit, on the slavery question, and that day is not distant, the slave States will be penetrated by these churches and backed by the united influence of the whole North, and the christian world, outside of slavery. They will set up an anti-slavery pulpit all through the South, and the christianity of that section of our country will be separated from slaveholding, by this pulpit ; and moral sentiment will be created, which will overthrow this great abomination. If God has not determined that the blood guiltiness of slavery shall be washed out with blood, the anti-slavery churches will most certainly free the slaves. They have now all the elements concentrated needful for this great work. It may take time, and this is the case with all great moral movements ; but the end is certain.

The mission of the anti-slavery churches of this nation is a glorious one, they are the fulcrum of the great moral lever that shall certainly overthrow American slavery. To be connected with one of these churches, is to be a part of the grandest moral movement yet dis-

played on the earth. It is an advanced step in the great work of the glorious Reformation—the conversion of the religion of christendom to christianity. Could the members of these churches fully realize the very great work whereunto God in his providence has called them, and judged them worthy, they would be overwhelmed with gratitude, and rejoice with exceeding great joy. We would say to our fellow-laborers, behold what manner of love our Heavenly Father hath bestowed upon us, that he should count us worthy of being leaders in so great and glorious a work. Let us give ourselves wholly to God and his work. We are now sowing, others will reap ; but the time is near when sowers and reapers shall rejoice together in the harvest of everlasting life.

But the overthrow of slavery is not the whole mission (of overturning wrong) of these churches. They have found a common ground upon which they can cordially and heartily act, and have a mutual joy in success. This will bring them nearer together in other things, soften their prejudices to each other ; produce a friendly feeling, which will lead to farther agreements in action, and farther joint triumphs over wrongs ; and thus they will come nearer and nearer to each other, as they proceed in their joint work, until they see eye to eye ; and the divided and the distracted family of God become one. Then we will have a church terrible as an army with banners, and the salvation of the world will then make haste.

That we are not mistaken as to the final result of joint action, is proven by the fact, that quite a number of these churches are now agitating the question, not only of co-operation, but of fusion—a permanent oneness.

We would kindly, and most affectionately ask our anti-slavery brethren, who are now in the communion of slaveholding churches, to look at this great question—the glorious destiny of anti-slavery christianity. You of right have a place in it, and ought to stand in that place. Why deprive yourselves of such a glorious privilege; the Christian anti-slavery movement needs you, and you need it. The slaves need you, the anti-slavery pulpit, now comparatively weak, yet the only hope of the crushed slaves, needs your aid. The pulpit which is now holding the slaves would gladly prevail on you to aid it in its work of death; but that is not your work; you have no heart for it; your conscience tells you not to do it. The churches you are in, must change or perish, you can find others that are right, on this question—just what you want; and what you want them, (on all things else;—) and these churches say to you, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good,” they would give you a hearty welcome and a happy home. Why not come with them? You will come, you must come, and the sooner you come the better.

The present dominant pulpit holds the slaves. The anti-slavery one, which we shall have—now have, will take the place of the slaveholding one, and then the slaves will be free. Next to our hope in God through Christ Jesus our Lord, we prize our connection with the pulpit. It is the hope of the slave. It has pitched the tune of freedom’s song, and that song will yet be sung, and this land shall be a free and a happy land indeed.

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